

Christmas Still Came

It's Christmas Eve, as I find myself hanging, suspended by ropes, arms spread out, on a platform in the middle of the prison. Today, I am to be lashed, mentally, spiritually and physically by the Associate Warden, determined to take the last hopes of my humility, my faith in God.

"Now boy, I'll learn you to obey me; you don't deserve no mercy!"

The Associate Warden's mouth froths with malicious hatred, as he skillfully holds his cowhide whip. I will be made an example - on Christmas Eve - that prisons have the authority to do anything they want to an inmate - even kill them - if they wish.

Around the Associate Warden stood his lieutenants, standing proud. The Medical Department giggled like old women gossipping at church, anxious to see the show. The Unit Manager, Case Manager and Counselor took bets to see how loud I'd scream.

I was stripped to only boxers, and every inmate watched from their cells' windows. Many prayed for me, many cried, knowing what I would endure.

"Get ready boy! Here's yo' Christmas presents!" he laughed as the Associate Warden uncurled his whip, and, with every lash, took my humanity...

No phone calls to family or loved ones over the holidays,

No stamps, envelopes or paper to write to anyone,

Forced isolation in a cell for over 60 days

Showers in filthy shower cells during the COVID-19 pandemic

Lash after lash, the whip licks my body, taking humanity from me. I do not deserve this, no inmate does, but prisons get away with such cruelty because no one cares to hold them accountable.

"You like that boy? That's just the beginning!"

No access to hygiene, forced to use worthless prison soap,

No access to over-the-counter medication, like aspirin or any pain relievers,

No access to batteries, to listen to the news,

No access to even snacks, forced to live on small portions.

Laughs erupt from the Medical Department, as the Education Department also enjoys →

the flogging. The Chaplain stands, Bible in hand, praising God for His mercy, and for so loving the world that He gave His only Begotten Son.

I scream blood-curling cries as crimson flows down my body. My spirit is being broken, and there is no one to help me. The whip continues it's work:

All mail arrived will be ~~read~~^{read} by staff, and discarded if the choose to throw it away,

Mail sent by inmates may, or may not, be sent, dependant on how staff feels;

No legal access to any inmate, and legal documents are routinely and illegally opened,

No pencils or pens made available to any inmate.

My body twitches with pain beyond words; I am broken down, and what little dignity I have left is leaving me - my body is already ravaged from an allergic reaction to the prison soap I've been forced to use. Hundreds of bumps cover my body from neck to toe. Misery was already on me before the lashing, but I could not give in.

"Now boy, I'm gon show you mercy you dont deserve. I'm gon give you a nice Christmas dinner, like every other inmate gon get. You like that boy?"

My words were simple... "I'm worth more than scraps..."

I passed out after the furious barrage of lashes...

I laid in my room, hours later, crying to my God. I simply could not, in good faith, accept a meal from this prison, after being treated so wickedly. Why, why would anyone treat people so cruelly? My sores would take months to heal, but I simply would not give them the authority to take my humanity, even if it costs me horrible pain. With no food for days, it would be hard.

But the next day, Christmas came. It came, because it simply had to.

With no compassion from the prison, and malicious torments, Christmas still came. And with it, hope. The world is in darkness, and fewer places are darker than in prison, where illegal oppression is common. But where we celebrate Christmas, we bring in hope.

Prisons actively try to rip that from inmates, but if we trust in God, and maintain our human dignity, hope, like Christmas, comes.

It always does —